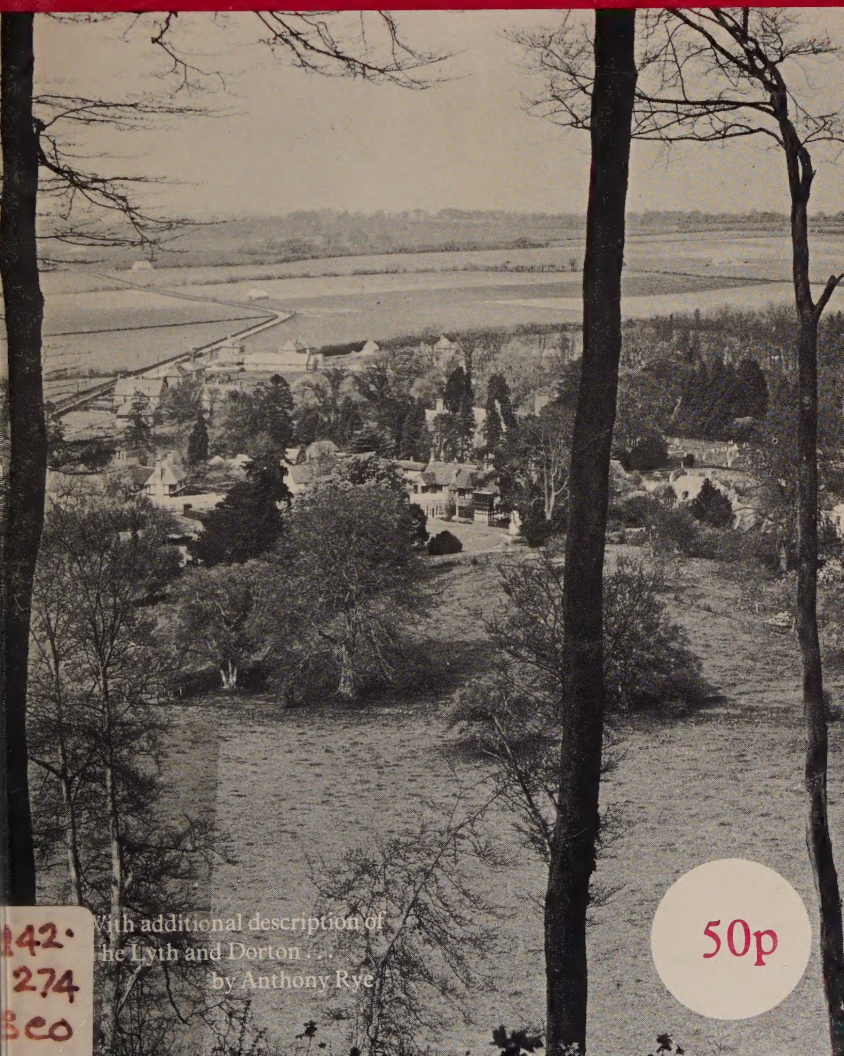
A SELBORNE

by W. S. Scott

HANDBOOK



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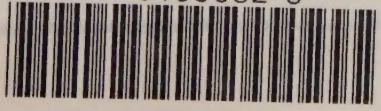

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NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE

A. F. Mitchell

SELBORNE lies at the foot of a steep scarp-face of chalk which sweeps across the southern edges of the village, which itself is on the underlying Upper Greensand. The streams arising from the spring-line at the junction of these strata have cut a quite deep valley below the village as they flow north to form the Oakhanger Stream. This is a splendid situation for a rich and varied flora and fauna, the higher lying chalk carrying a fine plant community largely of its own, whether under beechwoods or open grassland, the Upper Greensand being peculiarly favourable to dampland plants like golden saxafrage and marsh marigold, and the spring-line is often shown by areas of the great horsetail, lady's smock and other wet-land plants.

The Hanger and the woods each side of The Lythes are mainly of beech. The bigger trees are about 12 feet in girth, which indicates a general age of about 300 years. This is near the life-span of this tree, which, unlike oak, decays rapidly and blows down easily when over-mature. The best trees in Selborne are two which are among the finest of their kind in Britain. The Yew in the Churchyard was 23 feet in girth in 1778, when measured at three feet, where it now measures 25 feet 10 inches. It has thus, for the last 189 years averaged one inch increase every $5\frac{1}{2}$ years. From yews of known, recent dates on similar sites, however, this tree no doubt made the first ten feet in girth in about 130 years, but spent most of the rest of the time at half this rate before falling to the very slow growth now. Depending on when and at what rate the decrease occurred, ages from 650 to 850 seem the probable range. There are many bigger, but few with such a fine, clean bole. The second outstanding tree is the Tree of Heaven in the garden of The Wakes. This is 82 feet tall, and 12 feet 2 inches in girth. The smooth, silvery bark is striking in winter; in late spring the leaves emerge a bright red, and in summer they are like over-sized and shiny ash leaves. This is the biggest clean bole of the species known. The tree was introduced from N. China in 1751 and this one will have been planted soon after that date.

The birds of the area reflect the variety of woodland and thicket around. The warblers are well represented, chiff-chaff and willow warblers on the edges of the beech and a few wood warblers within it, whitethroat, blackcap and garden warbler in the thickets especially up on the Common, where there are also nightingales and night-

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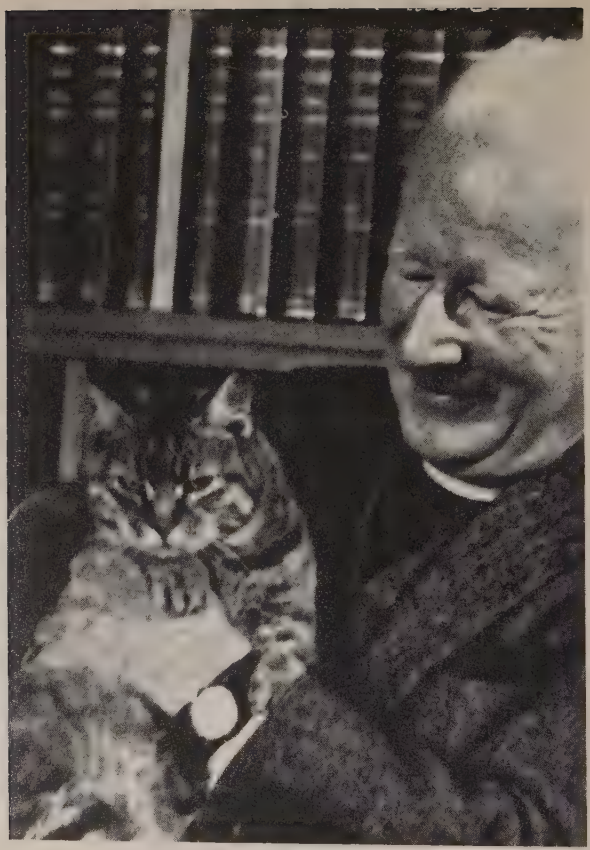
Photographs by Arthur W. Jollands, Alton (1967)

The above illustrations feature local wild life and were taken recently by a naturalist who lives close to Selborne. Contrary to the expectations of the many visitors to the village, there are no nature reserves and its wild life is afforded no special protection. Many people would welcome proposals, which may help Selborne's places of natural beauty to become wild life sanctuaries.

jars. Goldcrests sing from the conifers near the church and willow-tits inhabit the damp woodland edges, while the old beech trees ensure a number of nuthatches, green and great spotted woodpeckers. Very properly, the village street rings on summer evenings with the screams of swifts.

MAP OF THE VILLAGE

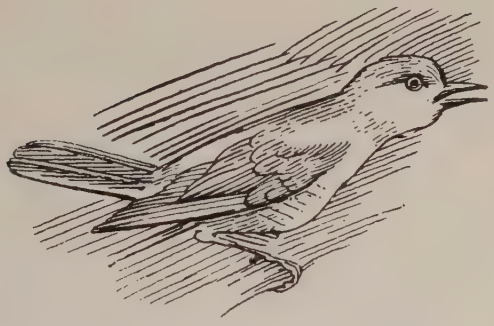


Photograph by Eric Williamson

The writer of this guide book, the Rev. Dr. W. S. Scott, is the author of a number of books on such diverse subjects as 15th century French history and 18th century English literature. It was from his father, the late Walter S. Scott, K.C., who wrote the standard biography of the naturalist, "White of Selborne", and who lived in the village for many years, that Dr. Scott gained the interest and knowledge of White and his home which resulted in his edition of "The Antiquities of Selborne".

Included in this guide is an article on Dorton, by Mr. Anthony Rye, author of "The Inn of the Birds", who is also responsible for four of the illustrations, and also Notes on Natural History of the Village by Mr. A. F. Mitchell.

This little book is addressed to those who desire further information, in short and readable form, about the beautiful spot made famous by Gilbert White in his NATURAL HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF SELBORNE; about its lovely old church; its mediaeval religious houses; its early lord of the manor, the renowned free-booter, Sir Adam de Gurdon; and the last labourers' revolt, which took place in Selborne in 1830.



Wood Warbler

From "The Inn of the Birds" by Anthony Rye.

See Selborne spreads her boldest beauties round,
The vary'd valley, and the mountain ground,
Wildly majestic!

Me far above the rest, Selbornian scenes,
The pendent forest and the mountain-greens,
Strike with delight: there spreads the distant view
That gradual fades, 'till sunk in misty blue.

GILBERT WHITE.

The only known existing portrait of Gilbert White from an Oxford sketch in his Iliad now in the British Museum.

Contents

	NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE	
	A. F. MITCHELL	7
	INTRODUCTION	13
I	A WALK ROUND THE VILLAGE	16
II	THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT MARY	28
III	SIR ADAM DE GURDON	37
IV	THE PRECEPTORY OF SOTHERINGTON	41
V	THE AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF BLESSED MARY OF SELBORNE	42
	ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LYTH AND DORTON BY ANTHONY RYE	49
	PLACES OF INTEREST AROUND SELBORNE	53

Introduction

The continued increase in the number of pilgrims to Gilbert White's native village of Selborne, and the lack of anything in the nature of a guide to the place, have combined to bring about the appearance of the present short book.

Although it is, of course, true to say that the great majority of visitors to Selborne know it only as the place made famous by the never-dying *Natural History*, it is worth while pointing out that the village has a history of its own, which will appeal not only, or even primarily, to the nature lover, but to the antiquarian and archaeologist, for in Selborne we still can see—somewhat altered, t is true, and changed not for the better—what is virtually a mediaeval village, the greater part of it still the property of one lord of the manor, with open fields (now owned in strips), its demesne, its common and waste, and its right of common and turbary.

In addition to this, Selborne is the proud possessor of an ancient and beautiful church, as well as the remains—scanty, it is true—of two mediaeval religious houses, a Priory of Augustinian Canons and a Preceptory of Knights Templars.

Further, the village can boast of having been the home of a renowned figure of the thirteenth century; one who, as one of the leaders of the forces of Simon de Montfort, was partially responsible for the initiation of parliamentary government in England, and who still sleeps soundly in the church of the village in which he lived so many centuries ago.

Not only to the natural historian and antiquarian, however, is Selborne a place of pilgrimage; the economist and the social historian also find it of special interest, for it was in this village, a century and a quarter ago, that the great tithe agitation made itself felt in the famous Selborne riots—the beginning indeed, of the movement for the suppression of a form of taxation which has now virtually come to an end.

It is in the hope that admirers of Gilbert White, coming to see the village which he made world famous, may like to read more about its early history, that I have written these pages.

Selborne. W. S. Scott.

July, 1950.

Introduction to the Fourth Edition

I should like to take the opportunity afforded me by the appearance of a fourth edition of the Selborne Handbook, of offering my grateful thanks to Mr. B. Paton of the Queen's Hotel for the care with which he has produced this new edition, which I hope may be of continued use to visitors to Selborne.

May I remind the reader that built into the wall of the Old Vicarage garden, on the north side of the Plestor, is an illuminated historical map of the locality. I should like to recommend all visitors to study this map before starting to tour the village, as it clearly shows the easiest and quickest way to the various things of interest to be seen in Selborne.

Again my grateful thanks are due to Miss Mina Greenhill for the sketch map of Selborne which illustrates this book.

Shortfield House, W.S.S.
February, 1973.

The Publishers of The Selborne Handbook wish to thank the advertisers, who have made this publication possible. Readers should find the advertisements useful to them.

FIRST EDITION PUBLISHED 1950

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Reprinted 1967

Reprinted 1973

Jubilee Year of our Queen Elizabeth II
Reprinted 1977

Original Sketches by Anthony Rye

Cover photograph of Selborne from the Hanger, by courtesy of "The Times".

Visitors to Selborne who wish to know more of various subjects only touched upon in this guide, may like to know of books in which they are treated in greater detail.

GILBERT WHITE:

Walter S. Scott, *White of Selborne*. Falcon Press. 1950.

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MISCELLANEOUS:

W. D. Macray, Characters of Selborne Priory. Hampshire Record. Society 1st series, 1891; 2nd series, 1894.

Selborne Priory, *History of Selborne Priory*. Excavation Cttee:

L. G. E. Sunderland, *Trouble at Selborne*. Queen's Hotel, Selborne, 1967.

The Perivale Bird Sanctuary. Selborne Society.

Katherine H. R. Kenyon, *Here and There but Mainly in Hampshire*, Winchester, Gilbert.

Most of the books mentioned above are obtainable from the Selborne Bookshop; some however are out of print, but should be obtainable through your local library.

CHAPTER I

A Walk Round the Village

Until the middle of the last century, the approach to Selborne was extremely difficult. Either one had to take the road from Alton, which necessitated going through Chawton and Farringdon as far as East Tisted, and thus entering the village by way of Galley Hill —a distance of some eight miles, although as the crow flies it is less than four—or the old mediaeval roadway, frequently impassable for wheeled traffic, which led by hollow ways, meandering over the fields from West Worldham, and entered Selborne by Gracious Street. Only in very fine summer weather was the Northfield lane usable.

If one came from the east, there were two lanes entering the village, both of which were unusable by traffic of any kind during several months of the year. The only remaining roadway was that leading by way of Empshott.

In 1836, Mudie, the well-known naturalist, visited Selborne, in order to gain material for his introduction to Blythe's edition of White's immortal book. He entered the village by a path across the fields from Alton (the modern road then not being in existence) and despite the length of the journey, he found himself well repaid by the beauty of the scenery.

"To understand and enjoy Selborne properly", he wrote, "the visitor must consent to be a pedestrian across the hills, or rather swelling grounds from Alton, the distance being from four to five miles. From the nature of the soil, which is generally speaking very tough and retentive, winter travelling along the foot-path here must be a work of 'difficulty and labour hard' as Milton expresses it; and even after a summer shower the path is greasy withal. It is also beset with a great number of stiles, with no steps to facilitate the crossing; but one journeying towards Selborne must not mind those little matters, and, as the foot-path is one of ups and downs, it is never very deep, or very long in drying after a shower. It is first up the slope from Alton, then down again to Trunchion, and so gradu-

ally up another slope by West Worldham and Hartley Farm, which last slope is long but not steep, but all the while there is no appearance of Selborne. After the long last slope is turned, however, and the descent, which is also gradual, is so far made, Selborne, of which the hills have again been seen from the top of the slope, makes its appearance in exactly the manner one would wish in order to have a general impression of it unbroken by details. A hedge forms the immediate foreground, over which the church and steeple, and a portion of the vicarage house, make their appearance. Clumps of trees conceal the village, but display over the vicarage a finely wooded park of about twenty acres, which abuts upon the late residence of White, and forms part of what was held, and we believe is still held, along with the lease of the house which he occupied . . . The Hanger, which consists of beeches, as mentioned by White, exceedingly rich in their foliage, and with the shoots so long at a distance to bear some resemblance to larches, lies immediately above the lawn of field already mentioned, and the extremity of it slants downwards towards the church . . . In short, there is nothing but water wanting to render this a very pretty landscape".

Save for the intrusion upon the scene of a handful of not too unsightly modern cottages, this description of the village as one approaches it from the north might have been written yesterday.

If we follow in Mudie's footsteps, we enter Selborne by what in his day was a footpath, and now is a well made modern road from Alton. On coming into the village, we see on our left the Plestor, or village green, with houses on two sides, and the old church standing serenly in her *litton* at the top of the slope. This Plestor was the gift of Sir Adam de Gurdon to the Priory in 1271, and has ever since his days been used as a play place (which is the meaning of the word), by the children of the village. It has recently been handed over by Magdalen College, Oxford, Lords of the Manor, as a gift to the Selborne Parish Council.

At the top of the rise, where is now the seat erected in 1937, in memory of the Coronation of King George VI, the stocks and whipping post used to stand. Not unnaturally these were unpopular in the village, and someone unknown removed them in the year 1750, as is recorded in the following entry in the Vestry Books: "As the stocks had been in an audacious manner carried away from the usual place, a reward of two guineas be offered by the parish officers to discover the person, or persons, who removed the stocks".

There is no record as to whether they were ever found again, despite the large amount offered as a reward. But others must have been erected on the old site, for in Grimm's drawing (1776) both stocks and whipping post are to be seen.

Grimm's drawing (1776) *of the Pleystow vulg the Plestor.*

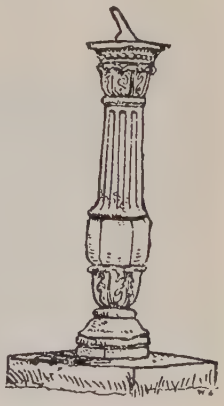
At the south-west corner of the Plestor stands Plestor House, whose walls are decorated with a form of ornamentation peculiar in the eighteenth century to the West Surrey-Hampshire border. It is known as "garnetting", and consists of small pieces of ferruginous stone stuck into the mortar between the bricks. It is referred to by White, in playful vein, as being studded with tenpenny nails.

Immediately opposite stands Wakes, long the home of the great naturalist. The middle portion of the house remains substantially the same as it was in his day. His brew-house still stands, and on its wall, as well as on the wall of the "Great Parlour" which he built, will be seen stones bearing his initials and the dates of their erection.

Inside The Wakes. Photograph, C. Nortcliffe.

In the garden, beside the ha-ha which he dug in order that his eyes might roam at will over the park without interruption to his view, his sundial still stands; while beside it meanders the little brick path which he laid down in order that he might get to his arbour (now demolished), without getting his feet wet. White had an almost pathological dislike for wet feet!

Across the road from Wakes will be seen the old butcher's shop, still shaded by the lime trees which White planted in 1756, for the purpose, as he put it, of screening the "blood and filth" from his view. In front of the house are some forty yards of cobbled pathway which he laid down at the cost of one pound for materials, carting and laying.



Gilbert White's Sundial.

A few yards further up the street stands the Queen's Hotel, formerly known as "The Compasses". This inn was the scene of the wild wedding party so graphically described by White in 1783. After the wedding was over, the bridegroom, accompanied by four "drunken companions . . . after they had drank all the second day at the Compasses . . . ranted and raved . . . and finally took the bride (who wept a good deal) and carried her away for Berks". The bridegroom "told the folks at the inn that whenever the next sister was married, he would come and spend ten guineas". Either the drunkenness or the lavish spending was evidently the sign of gentility, for White added that the common people all agreed that the groom was "the most of a gentleman of any man they ever saw"!

Immediately on the left is Hucker's Lane, which leads to the old *via canonorum*, joining the site of the Priory with the village. This lane was constructed in the thirteenth century, and leads along the valley of the Lythe, through a beautiful arcade of overhanging branches. The point of interest about it is that, after

The Main Street at Selborne with the Village Forge and the Queen's Hotel. Photograph by "Valentine".

passing Dorton, the cottage at the foot of the hill, the greater portion of the metalling, still quite sound, was the work of the canons before the suppression of their house in 1484. Parts of the road have been mended, but for considerable distances it remains just as they left it nearly five hundred years ago, a remarkable testimony to their skill in road-making in those far-off days.

Continuing up the village, we soon come to a parting of the ways; the branch on the left leads by way of Honey Lane to Blackmoor. About a mile along this lane we come to a turning on the left leading to the site of the Priory. At this corner, in a field on the left (still called Croucher's field, from the old word Crouch, a cross), stood the mediaeval wayside Cross or Rood, known as the Pires Crouch (probably a corruption of Prior's Cross). It has long since disappeared, but the neighbouring farm still retains the name of Rhode (Rood) Farm.

If we go along the right hand fork, we come in a couple of hundred yards to a sharp turning to the right, leading to a steep ascent. This hill is called Galley Hill, and the little eminence on the right is known as Kite's Hill. A presentment, always made at the manorial court, that it was "not ploughed", makes it evident that this was the site of the gallows, the Priory having *furcas*, or rights of life and death, granted to them by King Henry III.

Thatched Cottages at Selborne. Photograph by E. Hollowell.

In the field to the right, the King's Field, one of the old common fields of Selborne, Gilbert White carried out his well-known experiments with echoes, of which a full account will be found in Letter XXXVIII to Daines Barrington.

Shortly before reaching Hucker's Lane on our return journey, we see an opening on the left, with a footpath leading to the Hanger. This footpath marks an immemorial right of way, and is known as the "Punfle", a word presumably derived from Pond Field Path, the field through which it wends its way being known as the Pond Field. At the end of the Punfle three paths diverge; one, known as the Zig-Zag, was made under White's direction, and leads us to the top of the Hanger; the second, leading diagonally to the right, is known as the Bostal, and also goes to the top of the hill. It, too, was made by White. The third, known as Love Lane, runs along the bottom of the Hanger, and will bring us out again into the village at Gracious Street.

About two-thirds of the way up the Zig-Zag will be seen the small plateau upon which White built his first Hermitage, long since demolished.

At the top of the path stands the Obelisk, commonly known as the Wishing Stone, brought here by White and his brothers from the neighbouring village of Farringdon.

The Wishing Stone at the top of the Zig Zag path.

Returning to the village, and passing Wakes, we take the turning to the left, which, before the construction of the present high road, was the main road to Alton. It has the unusual name of Gracious Street. Of this, White writes (*Antiquities* XXVI), "an appellation not at all understood. . . This strange denomination we do not at all comprehend, and conclude that it may be a corruption from some Saxon word, itself perhaps forgotten".

The Wakes, Selborne, the home of Gilbert White, as it was in his day. The original building still exists, with later additions. Photograph by courtesy of "Birds and Country Magazine".

This guess, for it could hardly have been more, is at any rate partly correct. It certainly is a corruption of a Saxon word, though hardly a forgotten one, since a different corruption of the same word is well known to all workers in the city of London. Gracious is a corruption of *Garscherchestrate*, or Gracechurch Street, from the Anglo-Saxon, GAERS, herb or grass. Gracechurch Street in the City was the street of the church by the herb market. The derivation of the Selborne Gracious Street is obviously the same, as a herb garden was a constant appendage to a religious house. The *infirmarius*, or brother in charge of the sick, was commonly charged also with the care of the herb garden, in which he grew many of his medicinal plants.

A number of very picturesque cottages line the road for several hundred yards. The first cottage on the left, after the road makes a sharp turn to the right, is dated 1697 and known as Wheelwrights, and has a disused smithy adjacent to it. It is of particular interest to note that this smithy, which was only closed in 1943, was in continuous use since the thirteenth century, and in all probability the magnificent iron-work on the south door of the church was forged here in those early days.

In the Northfield, at the far end of Gracious Street, are still to be seen "linchets", or ancient cultivation terraces, which were presumably formed in pre-Norman times as the result of ploughing on a steep hillside. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, they seem to have been used for the purpose of growing grapes. A number of small vineyards existed in Selborne at the time, and indeed even later, for in his *Rural Rides* Cobbett writes (1823), "I have never seen such quantities of grapes upon any vines as I see upon the vines in this village".

Remains of Priory ownership are to be seen in the names of two fields abutting on Gracious Street—Coneycroft and Culvercroft. As their names imply, these were where the Canons kept their warren and their pigeon house. An interesting example of folk- memory is to be found in the fact that the hill behind Coneycroft is still sometimes referred to in the village as Mousey Mountain, although nearly five centuries have elapsed since the rabbit warren existed there. In the gardens of the modern house called Coneycroft are to be seen the manorial stews, now considerably altered and turned into ornamental ponds.

The Grange Farm, still so called, was the Grange of the Priory' built for the reception of the tithe grain. The Court Leet and Court Baron of Selborne were held in the great wheat-barn of the Grange from the earliest times until the year 1925, when copyhold tenure was abolished by the passing of the Birkenhead Act.

Opposite to the Grange, set at an angle to the roadway, stand Fisher's Buildings. Now divided into cottages, but then all one building, it was used as the village poorhouse between the year 1780 and 1835. This was the workhouse, famous in economic history, which suffered at the hands of the "Selborne Mob" in 1830. The mob first went to the Vicarage, and demanded that the Vicar, the Rev. William Cobbold, should reduce his tithes. What threats were used, is now unknown, but they must have been considerable, for Cobbold, believing that his life and those of his family, were in danger, signed a paper promising to reduce his tithes by half. The mob were accompanied by a number of local farmers, who were obviously chiefly responsible for the revolt, for they had urged the men on, saying that if the labourers would obtain a reduction of the tithe by force, they would correspondingly raise the men's wages.

Cobbold had, of course, no power to reduce the tithes, which were not his property, but that of the lord of the manor, Magdalen College, Oxford.

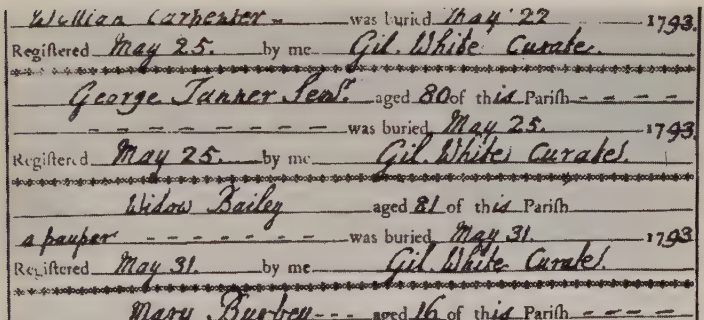
After the vicar had signed the paper, the mob set off to the workhouse in Gracious Street, now known as Fisher's Buildings. The master of the workhouse, in his evidence at the subsequent trial, deposed as follows: "There was not a room left entire, except that in which the sick children were. These were removed into the yard on two beds, and covered over, and kept from harm all the time. This was done by the mob. They were left there because there was no room for them in the sick ward. The sick ward was full of infirm old paupers. It was not touched, but of all the rest of the place not a room was left entire". Evidence was also given that not all the mob acted willingly of their own volition, for at least one of the labourers declared that his master had forced him to join in, and stood by while the destruction was going on.

Beneath the yew tree in the churchyard will be seen a mound, marked by a granite headstone, bearing the words "The Trumpeter". This is the grave of one Newland, who was horn-blower to the mob at the time of the revolt. When the men were arrested, Newland managed to escape, and hid among the beeches on the Hanger. At night he used to steal down into the village, and get food which his wife had ready for him. He was eventually captured, and sent for trial at Winchester, where many of his companions had already been found guilty, and a number of them transported to Australia.

The Trumpeter's Grave and the Yew Tree believed to be 1,300 *years old.*

His wife set out on foot to visit him in prison at Winchester, carrying her baby in her arms, in the depth of winter. On the way, so W. H. Hudson records, the baby's nose was frozen, and never got quite right. "His injured nose, which turns to a dark-blue colour and causes him great suffering in cold weather, has been a trouble and misery to him all his life long". Newland was eventually pardoned, and died in his bed at Selborne.

On account of the treatment meted out to him by the rioters, Cobbold was afterwards accompanied in his pastoral duties in the village by an enormous mastiff, to protect him from attack. The collar of this gigantic dog is still to be seen in the north chantry of Selborne Church, among other objects of interest.


William Carpenter was buried May 22 1793.
Registered May 25. by me Gil. White Curate.

George Tanner Senr. aged 80 of this Parish
was buried May 25. 1793.
Registered May 25. by me Gil. White Curate.

Widow Bailey aged 81 of this Parish
a pauper was buried May 31. 1793
Registered May 31. by me Gil. White Curate.

Mary Burbey aged 16 of this Parish
was buried June 10. 1793
Registered June 10. by me Gil. White Curate.

The Reverend Gilbert White M.A. aged 72 of this Parish
was buried July 1st 1793
Registered July 6th by me Ch: Taylor Vicar.

The last entries of Gilbert White in the Selborne Burial Register.

CHAPTER II

The Parish Church of Saint Mary

Despite the opinion of so considerable an authority as Mr. H. J. Massingham, who says of it that "it possesses the distinction of being now one of the ugliest churches in Hampshire" (*The Writings of Gilbert White*, 1938), the Church of Saint Mary in Selborne is one of the loveliest to be found anywhere in the south of England.

Save possibly the font, nothing remains of the Saxon church which occupied the site in the days of Edward the Confessor. The present church was presumably erected about the year 1180, the magnificent stone pillars being of late twelfth century date. Portions, at any rate, of the fabric of the nave may date back to the fourteenth century, but it is not easy to be certain. The chancel, and the north and south chancels, as the transepts have always been called, can be dated much more definitely.

The north chancel, now divided from the body of the church by a parclose screen of oak, erected as a memorial to those inhabitants of Selborne who fell in the wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45, was built about the year 1305. The embrasure of the north window is original, as are also the statue corbels on the east wall, though the position of these has been changed in recent years in order to allow a door to be cut into the modern vestry. Slight traces of fourteenth century colour remain on these corbels.

The large window which was formerly in this chapel, pictured in the Grimm's sketch of the Church, was replaced in the first half of the last century by the present window of three lights. The centre one contains four roundels of old glass, formerly in the possession of the White family, which were given to the church by Roger, Earl of Stamford, a collateral descendant of the naturalist. The topmost roundel depicts the arms of White of South Warn-

Chancel of Selborne Parish Church.

borough, also used (with a change of tincture, though with what authority is not clear), by the Selborne family; viz., argent within a bordure azure bezanty between three popinjays vert collared or a chevron gules. The glass is English, and dates from *circa* 1560. Below this are two other pieces placed side by side, one showing Josepeh recounting his dream, and the other King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. These are also probably English, of early seventeenth century date. That at the bottom depicts John Baptist, and is probably Flemish, of the late seventeenth century.

In this chapel is to be seen the *mensa* of the altar at which White was accustomed to celebrate the Holy Communion during the eleven years during which he officiated in this church. This was made by order of a previous Vicar, the Rev. Duncombe Bristowe, D.D., who left it to the church in his will.

Directly beneath the window and slightly to the east of the centre, will be seen, flush with the floor, the tomb-stone of the renowned warrior, Sir Adam de Gurdon. It is probable that this chapel was built as a chantry for the saying of masses for his soul's salvation.

The south chancel was originally screened off from the body of the church by a parclose, of which nothing now remains, although the plaster work above the capital shows by its roughness where the parclose originally joined the pillar. This chantry is believed to have been founded in 1284, by Ela Longespee, Countess of Warwick, granddaughter of Henry II and Fair Rosamund, in honour of St. Stephen, St. John Baptist and St. Thomas of Canterbury.

The statue niche on the north east wall to the north of the altar, presumably once contained a statue of Thomas a Becket. If this presumption is correct, then the statue was removed by order of Henry VIII, who ordered not only that all statues of this saint should be removed from churches, but also that his name should be deleted from the office books, and that he should no longer be commemorated. This would account for the fact that not many years after the Reformation, the dedication of this chantry had already passed from memory, and the chapel was only known as the south chancel.

The foot-pace of the chantry is tiled with thirteenth century tiles, probably brought here from the Priory at the time of the latter's suppression in 1484.

The whole of this south aisle was built about 1220, and was again rebuilt during the unfortunate "restoration" in the last century. In 1730 the walls at both ends of this aisle were strengthened, the cost being defrayed by a legacy left for the purpose by Gilbert White, Senior, Vicar of Selborne.

In 1920, the eastern-most window of the south wall was filled with stained glass in memory of the naturalist. The window is attractive, and shows Francis of Assisi, surrounded by all the birds which White mentioned in the *Natural History*. The background of the window shows the church, the old vicarage in which White was born, and the famous yew-tree. Beneath are the arms of White, and the inscription:

GILBERT WHITE

1720-1793
Lovers of nature and the man
have placed this window here
as a mark of admiration
and esteem

1920

At the west end of this aisle stands the font. It consists of three massive blocks of stone, and appears to be of late Saxon date. Presumably it was the font of the original Saxon church. On the rim will be seen the remains of four locks; two diametrically opposite pairs. One pair was used for locking the cover of the font, in order to prevent theft of the consecrated baptismal water—a theft often attempted in the middle ages in order that it might be used for purposes of sorcery. The other pair were probably added in the reign of King John, in order to ensure that the sacrament of baptism should not be administered during the Interdict. This would account for the presence of a second lock; the keys of the original lock would have been in the hands of the priest.

The chancel is of peculiar interest as having one of the very few barrel roofs which were originally built with the intention of being left unceiled. The majority of barrel roofs were ceiled over with plaster, but this one, as far as our records go, was left unceiled. It was afterwards ceiled over at the end of the seventeenth century, and about a century ago was restored to its original design.

The Font.

The communion rails used in White's time had oak balusters, placed very close together, for the purpose of keeping dogs out of the sanctuary. These may still be seen in the south chantry, although the balusters have been removed, and nineteenth century iron work inserted in their places. It may be of interest to know that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a *wiper of doges* was appointed to whip them out of church. He was armed with a pair of long tongs for seizing them, as well as a whip.

The present rails and candlesticks are of Elizabethan date, and came from the church of Saint Juliot in Cornwall. They were placed here in 1942 in memory of J. E. Jefferson Hogg.

Over the communion table will be seen a triptych, representing the *Adoration of the Magi*, presented to the church in 1793 by Gilbert White's brother Benjamin. It is attributed to the Flemish master Jan Mostaert, and dates from *circa* 1510. Some alterations have been made in the painting since it left the artist's hand, notably in the addition of the lion. It is interesting to compare this with the triptych attributed to the same master, on the north wall of the church of St. Jacques, in Bruges.

The centre portion of the east wall was rebuilt during the so-called restoration of 1877, when the two small lancets of White's time were removed, and the present window inserted in their place, containing objectionable coloured glass, typical of the period.

The Selborne picture: Triptych representing the "Adoration of the Magi", attributed to Jan Mostaert.

In the north pillar of the chancel will be seen an unusual feature, a small arched shelf, cut into the side of the pillar, and apparently contemporary. Its purpose is uncertain, but it was probably used as an aumbry. It may have contained the consecrated oils used for Baptism, Confirmation and Unction, but it

is impossible to speak with certainly. It is just possible, considering its position on the north side, that it may have been used as an Easter Sepulchre, though it would be unusually small for such a purpose.

One of the benches of *circa* 1485, is still to be seen in the chancel; and portions of others have been used in the clergy seats and reading-desk.

The south door is worthy of study. Though much of the woodwork is modern, the ironwork is of thirteenth century date, and is believed to have been manufactured locally. It is interesting to note that there has always been an iron-worker in the village since the twelfth century. (See Chapter I, *Gracious Street*).

Selborne was one of the latest churches in England to retain the custom, at one time common, of the virgin crants. On the decease of a younger parishioner, whose reputation was unblemished, a chaplet ornamented with rosettes and five gloves, was cut out of paper, and carried to the church in front of the coffin. After the service it was hung in the church. The gloves represented a challenge to anyone to asperse the character of the deceased. In this village, the custom held for many years, the entry of such a burial in the register being marked by the addition of the word *Virgin*. The last Selborne funeral at which the garlands were hung seems to have been that of Jane Lavington, Virgin, in 1714.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth the custom was quite usual in England. The reference in Hamlet to the use of these garlands, or *crants* as they were called, will be remembered:

> And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
> She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd
> Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
> Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her;
> Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants,
> Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
> Of bell and burial.

Probably one of the first things the admirer of White will wish to see in Selborne is the great naturalist's grave. It lies to the north of the chancel, the fifth grave from the wall. "The grave" (to borrow the words of his biographer) "is of the simplest sort, marked only with his initials and the year of his death, well becoming the unpretending reserve of his earthly years".

The simple grave of Gilbert White.

In the churchyard, near to the great south door, stands the famous yew, to which White consecrated the fifth letter of his *Antiquities*. Its girth is now nearly 28 feet, and in all probability it is fast approaching its thirteen hundredth year. Except for some untoward accident, it should see several centuries more, as it is in a flourishing state, despite the loss of two large branches in the storm of April, 1950.

Before leaving the church and churchyard, it may be interesting to refer to what are known as the "Selborne lies". This unflattering name is given to certain monuments of the White family in the church, which make incorrect statements. The first of these is Gilbert's own memorial, which begins with the words "In the fifth grave from this wall are buried the remains of the Rev. Gilbert White". This statement was of course true when the tablet was erected on the outside of the north wall, but its removal on account of the effect of the weather makes it no longer true.

The second is the tomb slab of the elder Gilbert White, grandfather of the naturalist, which will be seen in the middle of the chancel, just outside the communion rails. It covers no remains at

all. The grave was previously where the console opening of the organ chamber now is, and when the instrument was installed in 1877, the remains were removed and re-interred in the churchyard. The place of their re-burial is unknown.

The third of the "lies" is the promise on the elder White's memorial, "Mox secutura". Considering that her spouse died in 1727, and that Rebekah lived on until 1755, "mox" is hardly the word to describe her unfulfilled pledge! A fourth "lie" is to be seen on the same memorial, in the first words of the inscription, *Prope hunc Parietem Sepelitur* . . . This was of course true when the tablet was first erected on the former north wall of the chancel, but when this was demolished to allow for the erection of the organ, the monument was removed to its present position on the west wall of the north chantry, and its statement as to the burial place of the elder Gilbert White is no longer accurate.

Main Street showing The Queen's Hotel and Limes Annexe

Photograph by Frith

CHAPTER III

Sir Adan De Gurdon

Apart from that of Gilbert White, there is no doubt that the best-known name connected with Selborne is that of the famous knight who was captured by Prince Edward in May, 1266, during the rising of Simon de Montfort.

The story begins in the days of Richard Coeur-de-lion, King of England. In the year, 1199, a large amount of treasure was found in the chateau of Chaluz, whose owner was a vassal of Richard's old enemy, the Vicomte de Limoges. To this treasure Richard laid claim, which was stoutly resisted. The king promptly laid siege to the castle, during which he was fatally injured by an arrow shot from the walls. With the generosity which was so marked a characteristic throughout his life, Richard gave orders that the archer's life should be spared, but after the king's death he was flayed alive by order of Merchadeus.

The archer who met with so hideous a death was one Bertrand de Gourdon, who came, as his name would indicate, from the little mountain town of Gourdon in Provence.

Despite his official grief, Richard's brother and successor, King John, was in reality overjoyed at the news of his brother's death. It is impossible to prove any connection, but it is a matter of some interest that soon after he came to the throne, King John—for reasons best known to himself—gave a considerable property at Selborne, together with twelve pounds of *blanche* silver at the neighbouring village of Tisted, to one Adam de Gurdon. Whether or no this was by way of gratitude for a brother's death it is now impossible to say.

This Adam de Gurdon was the son of one of King John's mercenaries, who had come to England from the same little town as his namesake Bertrand, in order to sell his sword to the best advantage. Soon after he had taken up residence in his manor, there was born to him a son, also called Adam, afterwards to become the renowned free-booter, and right-hand man of Simon de Montfort during the Baron's War.

This son (Adam III), at the age of about thirty, married Constance, daughter of Sir John de Venuz, a Hampshire neighbour, and widow of Robert de Pont de l'Arche of Newton, now Newton Valence, a village close to his native place.

This Constance brought her second husband the third part of her previous husband's considerable barony. Like his father-in-law Sir John de Venuz, de Pont de l'Arche was evidently connected in some way with the Great Marshalsy, for he bore the arms of the Earl Marshal with a change of tincture.

Adam's only legitimate child, Joan was born in 1260. It seems therefore probable that his marriage had not long taken place. His wife's first husband had died in 1245-6.

Adam had evidently become involved in the de Montfort rising by reason of his friendship for and employment by William de Cantilupe, one of de Montfort's chief followers. On April 2nd, 1266, the king granted a safe-conduct until Whitsunday (May 16th), at the instance of Henry de Allemainia, for Adam de Gurdon "coming to the King's Court, staying there, treating of his peace, and going back again on condition that he do no damage in the meantime to King, nor procure any".

Almost immediately after the expiry of this safe-conduct, de Gurdon was captured, either on May 19th, as one chronicler has it, or on May 21st, according to another, *in bosco de Aultona.*

As to the location of this wood, there is considerable difference of opinion. Some hold that it was Halton Wood at Kimber, on the ground that de Gurdon was marching towards Northampton after the battle of Evesham. Others believe that the Alton referred to is the Alton in Hampshire; its proximity to de Gurdon's home at Selborne, the reputation of the Pass of Alton, and the long standing legend that the place was a dell to the east of the village of Long Sutton, are strong presumptions in favour of the latter belief.

However it may have been, all the chroniclers agree as to what happened. Prince Edward found de Gurdon in the wood, waylaying travellers along the road. The prince had a most valiant fight with him, and wounded him, but being struck with natural admiration, had his wound bound up, and took him off, not as a

foe, but as a guest. But, according to his usually kindly habits, he had de Gurdon's followers duly hanged upon the trees!

De Gurdon was not released until the early months of 1268, and only then by virtue of a hard bargain with the queen, whose prisoner he was. He had to surrender to her a carucate of land at Alton, which had belonged to his mother Ameria—probably her paternal inheritance, fallen to him by reason of her death not long before. He was also obliged to have recourse to the Jew Benedict, son of Abraham of Winchester, for help in paying off the composition which by the Dictum of Kenilworth he had to meet for the recovery of the rest of his lands. To this man he sold a messuage in the high street of Winchester on May 10th, 1268.

So much for the tale of Prince Edward's astonishing magnanimity, which one must admit has never been very evident in any part of his history. So far as can be seen, Sir Adam de Gurdon was in no way better treated than any other of the disinherited!

The story of Adam de Gurdon should have ended here, had it not been for a discovery made in purely fortuitous fashion in 1948.

It will be remembered that in the *Antiquities of Selborne* Gilbert White refers (Letter III) to the north chancel of the parish church as having contained a tomb beneath an arch in the north wall. For many years no tomb has been visible, the whole of the chapel having been filled, many years ago, with a series of stone steps which had apparently at some time been a gallery for pews.

It having been decided to remove these steps in order to erect a screen across the chapel, as part of a memorial to the men of Selborne who lost their lives in the two World Wars, the work was put in hand in June, 1948, when the tomb to which White had referred was once more exposed to the light of day. It took the form of an altar tomb, and stood along the north wall of the chapel.

Several interested persons were called to advise upon the tomb, amongst them the writer; they decided to remove the covering slab of Purbeck stone, which was in a somewhat broken condition.

This was done, and beneath two courses of stone inserted in comparatively modern times, was a fine early fourteenth century stone built grave, containing the greater part of the skeleton of a man of enormous size, together with some bones of a woman or youth.

The whole of the earthen floor of this chapel is filled with bones, and it is at least possible that some of these were interred in the grave by accident when it was opened in the seventeenth century, during the vicariate of Gilbert White, senior, grandfather of the naturalist.

It is evident that the man burried here must have been someone of considerable local importance. It will be remembered that de Gurdon and Constance his wife had received a licence from the Prior and Convent of Selborne to build an oratory in their manor house for their own domestic worship, saving all rights and privileges of the mother church of Selborne. The chapel which de Gurdon built under this licence was attached to the north side of his manor house at Temple, and stood until the middle of the last century, when it was destroyed. Nothing of the oratory now remains, although a small length of wall from the original house is still *in situ*.

It is evident that rights of burial were retained by the parish church, and since there is no record of de Gurdon having died away from home, there are reasonable grounds for supposing that he was laid to rest in Selborne church. The date of the chantry and the tomb both correspond with that of his death, and taking into account the enormous size of the skeleton (for it is on record that he was "almost a giant"), there can be but little doubt that the bones found in the early fourteenth century grave are those of the renowned freebooter.

The remains were re-buried in the original grave on June 23rd 1948, and the tomb is now flush with the floor.

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well".

CHAPTER IV

The Preceptory of Sotherington

At some date in the thirteenth century (and it is impossible to be more exact), a preceptory was established by the Knights Templar in the parish of Selborne. This Order, the Poor Knights of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, was one of the three great military Orders of mediaeval times, the other two being the Knights Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights.

Although it is difficult to be certain of both facts and dates in this connection, it is very probable that after the death of Sir Adam de Gurdon, his daughter and heiress, Joan Achard, about the year 1305, or thereabouts, gave the house which her father used as his *curia* or manor house, to the Order. However it were that it came into their hands, possess it they certainly did, for not only has the property borne the name of Temple ever since, but was tithe-free, for "by virtue of their order", as White wrote, quoting Blackstone, "the lands of the Knights Templar were privileged by the Pope with a discharge from tithes".

In the year 1307, in the month of November, the Pope called on the kings and princes of Christendom to arrest all Templars everywhere. In England they were arrested in the following January, and the Order was suppressed by a Bull of May 6th, 1312. It is evident, therefore, that the Order could not have held their preceptory in Selborne for more than seventy years at the outside, and could not have been in their new home at Temple for longer than six or seven years.

Of the buildings described by White in Letter IX of the *Antiquities* nothing now remains save a small piece of the north wall, the old cellars, and the well in the garden. The oratory, which was still standing when White wrote, and which is clearly to be seen in Grimm's drawing, has altogether disappeared.

CHAPTER V

The Augustinian Priory of Blessed Mary of Selborne

In the year 1232 the then Bishop of Winchester, Pierre des Roches, founded a Priory of Augustinian Canons in Selborne. He bought from one Jacobus de Achangre, who resided, as his name implies, in the hamlet of Oakhanger, a neighbouring village to Selborne, a croft of land upon which to build the house. Shortly afterwards the same Jacobus made a grant of three more crofts adjoining, and received in all the sum of fifty-six marks for his lands.

In the same year (1233) James de Norton sold to the Bishop several crofts of land between Dorton and the lands previously acquired, for the sum of thirty-five marks *ad me acquietandum versus Judeos*, that is in order that de Norton might pay a debt he had contracted with money-lenders.

The Bishop, thinking apparently that there was still insufficient land for his new foundation, applied to the king, Henry III, who granted him further lands in Selborne, of which Stephen de Lucy had been the life tenant. The king also added almost every possible privilege and immunity, the most important of which were freedom from taxation and rights of justice.

In the following year, the Convent obtained a Charter of Liberties from the Crown, and the Bishop of Winchester granted it the advowsons of Selborne, Basing and Basingstoke. In 1235, the Pope, Gregory IX, issued a Bull confirming the foundation of the Priory, and conferring various privileges upon it.

The Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, as their name would imply, followed the Rule of Saint Augustine, which was in every way less rigorous than the Rule of Saint Benedict. None the less, the Rule of Augustine was arduous in intention however lax it often became in practice. Its chief prohibitions were directed against

the ownership of personal property, and there were many trivial, and doubtless infuriating, regulations. The receipt of letters, for example, was a punishable offence; communication had to be in common. Washing of the body was strictly prohibited save in case of illness, and then only permitted when ordered by a doctor.

Their dress was very different from that of most of the religious Orders. Over a black cassock they wore a white rochet; over that again a black cloak and hood. They did not wear the scapular. In choir they carried a fur almuce over the left arm. In contradiction to monks, who were shaved, canons regularly wore their hair and beards.

Evidently the canons of Selborne soon got out of the way of wearing their habit, as was enjoined to them by their Rule, and appeared in lay dress, for two of the chief complaints levelled against them by a later Bishop as Visitor were concerned with breaches of the sumptuary regulations.

The full number of Canons at Selborne was fourteen, but the number was seldom complete, and as the years rolled on, the number of those who entered the religious life in this Priory became fewer and fewer, despite the comparative wealth of the foundation.

In 1271, opportunity for gaining greater wealth and importance was offered to the Priory, when Sir Adam de Gurdon presented them with a most valuable gift—that of the Plestor. As soon as the Canons became possessed of this piece of ground, they procured a Charter from King Henry III granting them a market, and they began to erect stalls upon it. In addition to this market, which was held weekly on Tuesdays, the king granted the Priory a yearly three-day fair, to be held on August 14th, 15th and 16th.

It is uncertain when the fair was last held; all that can be said is that Professor Bell, writing in 1877, said that he had spoken to various old people who remembered it, and spoke of it as an occasion of village festivity. As Bell first came to reside in the village in the fifties, the fair must have been still held at the time of White's death or thereabouts. Apparently the original fair, held under King Henry's charter, must have lapsed long before then, for according to White, the fair of his day was set up "by a set of jovial fellows who had found in an old almanack that there had been a fair here in former days . . . and were desirous to revive so

joyous a festival". The date "was altered to May 29th, because the former day often interfered with the wheat harvest". There is now no fair held in Selborne.

In White's day, however, the fair must have been a big occasion for enjoyment, for the village was then so cut off, owing to the desperate state of the roads, that the inhabitants were unable to go outside the village, save on rare occasions, to seek amusement. It was presumably the Selborne fair which inspired Gilbert White to write the following lines:

So have I seen at country fair
A sturdy swain well warmed with ale,
Strip into buff and stamp and swear,
With choler and resentment pale;
But finding no antagonist
Whereon to vent his high disdain,
Cool by degrees, friends interpose
Then put on shirt and frock again.

The life of the Canons did not differ very greatly from that of the surrounding lay people. It is evident from the complaints of the Visitor that the canonical hours, and even the Masses, were frequently neglected; that there was a good deal of social life unfitting men who had taken vows; that some of the canons were just as illiterate as the layfolk; that their sexual morality was suspect; and that in many respects they lived the life of their ordinary neighbours.

Despite the *Visitatio Notabilis* of William of Wykeham, when stern directions were given for filling up the vacant canonries to the number of fourteen, the number does not seem to have increased for in 1410, during the episcopate of Cardinal Beaufort, Thomas Weston, the Prior, died, and the ten remaining canons met to elect his successor.

Beaufort apparently informed the pope that a certain amount of property belonging to the Priory had been alienated, which resulted in a Bull commanding the immediate revocation of all deeds of alienations. Things in the Priory went from bad to worse; fewer still were appointed canons. By 1470 there were only four in addition to the Prior. One other was appointed but the Prior died,

and the position was the same as before. The next Prior died a year later, and when the new Prior was appointed it was a case of the little nigger boys for there were only three. In 1484 there was again a vacancy in the Priorship and the Bishop nominated Ashford, one of the three remaining Canons as Prior.

Within a few months both Canons had disappeared; whether by death or resignation is not known and the whole capitular body was represented by the Prior alone.

The then Bishop of Winchester, William Waynflete, who had founded his college of Saint Mary Magdalen at Oxford in 1459, found the revenues which had been put at its disposal insufficient for its expenses. The College then suggested to its founder that he might alienate the revenues of the deserted Priory of Selborne to the said College. The Bishop appointed commissaries to inquire into the state of the Priory, with the result that the Bishop dissolved it and impropriated its property and revenues to the College. In 1486 Pope Innocent VIII confirmed the suppression of the Priory and it was no more.

The buildings of the Priory soon became ruinous, a large quantity of the stone, already squared, being found suitable for use in buildings in the village. Some of it is still to be seen incorporated in houses in Selborne. The College showed itself totally regardless of the beauty and antiquity of the remains and paid only for the services of one man, a priest and bailiff combined, to reside in the ruined Priory and do the necessary caretaking.

The lands were leased out to farmers, and soon nothing remained above the surface of the Priory which once glorified the little valley.

> Adown the vale, in lone, sequester'd nook,
> Where skirting woods imbrown the dimpling brook,
> The ruin'd Abbey lies: here wont to dwell
> The lazy monk within his cloister'd cell;
> While papal darkness brooded o'er the land;
> Ere Reformation made her glorious stand:
> Still oft at eve belated shepherd-swains
> See the cowl'd spectre skim the folded planes.
>
> Gilbert White, *The Invitation*, 35-42.

SELBORNE PRIORY EXCAVATIONS

In the hope that it might be possible to find out the ground plan of the Priory buildings, excavations were begun in 1953 and have been continued each summer since then. The careful work required by the small team of voluntary "diggers" has made progress slow, but by the beginning of the 1967 season the plan of the greater part of the monastic buildings has been revealed, including that of the 205 feet long conventual church, with its transepts and chapels, the chapter house, the cloister, and the sanitary and water supply systems.

One of the most interesting of the floor tiles found at Selborne Priory shows the Double Headed Eagle, of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, surrounded by decorations of birds, animals, and leaves—a fore-runner of that "Natural History" which has made Selborne famous! This tile, now called the "Gilbert White Tile", is found only at Selborne, Binstead Church, and the neighbouring Priories of Shulebrede and Durford.

During the process of excavation, a vast number of "finds" has been discovered, and many of these can be seen at the Wakes Museum in Selborne and the Curtis Museum in Alton. Of these, pride of place must be given to the beautifully carved stone "boss" from the roof vaulting of the quire (which the experts say is unique of its type in England) together with other examples of decorative stone carving. Also of great interest is the collection of patterned floor tiles, bearing representations of castles, armorial bearings grotesque animals, fish, and a variety of floral and decorative designs, into which the cross and fleur de lis have been incorporated. Other finds include pottery vessels, window glass still bearing designs, silver coins, bronze reckoning counters, metal buckles and spoons and many objects of iron, including a hunting spear, arrow heads, hawk's bell, spurs and various tools.

Several burials have been brought to light, probably those of priors, some in stone coffins. The most intriguing of the latter is that of a lady, buried in a place of honour near the high altar. Research has so far failed to establish her identity; she was in all probability some connection of the founder, or of some benefactor to the priory.

Research in the British Museum and elsewhere has filled in many gaps in the history of the Priory, un-recorded by Gilbert White in his "Antiquities of Selborne". For instance, it has been established that the first prior, John, hitherto only a "name" in the charters, was in fact the great friend and fellow student in his young days, of Richard de Wych, Bishop of Chichester, later known to history as St. Richard. It is recorded that one of the miracles St. Richard performed, was at Selborne Priory, when on a visit to his old friend, the Saint blessed the Priory fishpond, and immediately a giant pike was caught. This, and other interesting facts which historical research has brought to light, are recorded in the recently published pamphlet on the Priory and its history and excavation.

Victorian Poster Bed at Queens Hotel, Selborne.

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The Lyth and Dorton

Of these favourite haunts Gilbert White tells us: "There is a steep abrupt pasture field and interspersed with furze close to the back of this village, well known by the name of the Short Lithe . . . " and again, " . . . there are three steep pastures in this parish called the Lithe from Hlithe, *clivus*". A Saxon word, he says.

If you stand on the bridge where the road to Alton crosses the Bourne and look down the valley you will see on your left the part of the Lyth he first mentions. White's field crickets (see Letter XLVI) inhabited this slope, his famous view of Selborne from the N.E. was drawn from the top of it farther along, and as a child he would look out on this valley from the terrace of the vicarage garden to your right. There was no bridge then, of course, and no trees on this part of the Lyth at all. Those you now see were planted some time between his death in 1793 and 1842. The old people locally still refer to this as "the plantation", and the Short Lyth Plantation is properly its name. The word, by the way, severally spelt Lithe, Lyth and Lythe, but usually the latter, is invariably pronounced short to rhyme with myth, and I spell it here accordingly.

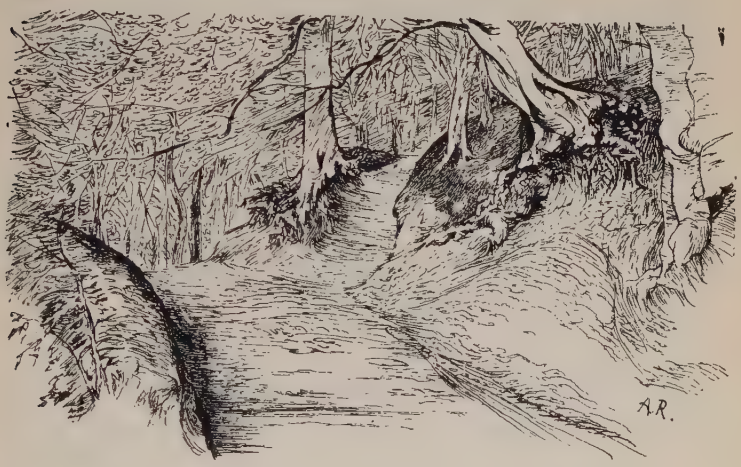
The Lyth, then comprises this plantation and the Short Lyth and the Long Lyth down in the vale. Together with the Hanger it shares the chief glory of Selborne. In its different way it may be felt to equal the Hanger for beauty. It is not to be seen from the village street and its particular virtue gains something different from this retirement. To reach it and its companion feature, Dorton, you must go down Huckers Lane entering from the street, between the Queen's Hotel and the blacksmith's shop. Level at first, this lane quickly becomes very steep, and from the moment you begin to descend into the valley you are in a world almost unchanged since the eighteenth century.

The Lyth, recently presented to the National Trust by Mr. R. R. Edgar of Newton Valence, is directly reached through a stile in Church Meadow half way down Huckers Lane on the left, but let us go first to Dorton. This region begins at the foot of the lane, which only then becomes the *Via Canonorum* more usually called Priory Lane. There are two parts of Dorton (or The Dorton—White suggests it meant a place where anciently deer were confined), and the part you enter first is Little Dorton, a space, nowadays brambly, of about an acre or more. The Well-head stream joins the Bourne just here, and so you have both Selborne's little rivers in combined flow on your left, also an old stone cottage, known to White, close under the great beeches of the Short Lyth which is here so precipitous that one doubts its ever having been a pasture, however rough. A cow, White tells us, once fell from the top to the bottom of this Lyth—and lived!

Here the main vale is before you, with lesser valleys right and left. The swampy floor of Church Meadow feeds king-cups, meadowsweet, herb Robert and Ragged Robin in season and a great oak in that meadow, sentinel above the stream, is the last of a whole copse of them which stood in White's time. With all this and the richly treed slopes on one hand, the tilted pastures on the other, you may feel you are at the heart of White's Selborne and of pastoral England now grown rare. Crossing this open space you reach Great Dorton, the lane running through its wood to a gate at its far limit.

All Dorton, great and little, was and is a "common", but the word here might be misleading. It never was a public common. It belongs, as it has done for nearly five hundred years, to Magdalen College, Oxford. In 1966 Dorton passed out of the hands of the

College but until quite recently certain copyholders in the village had rights-in-common in it—wood rights and grazing. Gates contained this fenced-in common-land which, as to Little Dorton, was once browsed as smooth as a lawn, though indomitable spears of the yellow iris still started up in its turf. The gate nearer the village has only just (1960) disappeared, its rotted posts for the last time banged against by some intrusive lorry.



"*The old beeches . . . gripping with eagle talons*".

Take particular note, as you enter Dorton's wood, of the old beeches gripping the high eroded bank on your right with eagle talons. Generations of boys have played under this bank in the caves you see beneath it, under those exposed roots. Beyond the bank a cart-way leads off and up under the trees to a field called Upper Burchams which has borne that name five centuries. Lower Burchams lies parallel with it below Priory Lane a little farther on. Down on your left immediately here, under a great and wide-spreading beech, is a seat set to enable you to look back towards the Hanger, but the group of hazels in the field called Dogs Ford prevents you.

The short walk now is to proceed to the far gate and back again. The longer walk is to come by a circle, taking in the Long Lyth. Returning to the stile mentioned in Huckers Lane, a foot-

path, now almost invisible, leads diagonally across Church Meadow to the foot-bridge on the Lyth side near Dorton cottage. This is the way the naturalist would come, approaching it thus, or through the churchyard. Here White used to pause to note the rare toothwort growing among hazels long vanished, as he had noted herb Paris in the "church lytton coppice" above. As he passed on he would look keen-eyed as always at the state of the perennial spring welling here, as by routine he so noticed all such springs in Selborne which is as liable to drought as to floods. Just beyond the Short Lyth the skirting path becomes the main footpath to Oakhanger and you are in the Long Lyth.

This walk along and round and back by Dorton is perhaps the loveliest in Selborne. Gilbert White loved it. It formed a principal delight in his "Summer Evening Walk"—his happiest poem—where he speaks of going "adown the vale" and of the "cowl'd spectre" which "skims the plain". There is a big field below and beyond the Lyth to this day called by some "the plains". But if we doubted its importance to him this quotation from his old friend and admirer John Mulso must settle it:

> *I see you under the beeches of the Lythe; you are in more soft and mild attitudes; a sort of pastoral spirit possesses you. You hardly want to look over the blue forest, so contented are you in your green recess; you see even the possible lake before you, and almost hear the waterfall from the imaginary rock.*

The Long Lyth and its footing mead, Lyth Meadow, stretches before you with its greatest beech trees of all in a long gradual curve in perspective. The beeches have been felled of late, the meadow planted out with poplar saplings still fortunately so young that something of the old effect can be discerned. There is hope, too, of this meadow being restored. Giant trees are here yet, and under some of them, as under the church mead oak, we may presume White lingered. They helped to form perhaps his "green recess".

At the end of the Lyth you look towards hidden Priory and down to a hunting-gate in the further corner of the field, Coombe meadow, which may be reached after some hazard in swampy places glorious with flag in June, to admit you quickly to a bridge, and over it to Great Dorton. This gate is reputed haunted by a monk (the Cowl'd Spectre?) and dogs have reacted strangely here, as if they "saw" something. Dorton's wood through which you are to return is visible above you. Over this bridge, up through the one-time rough pasture space, now much overgrown, and you are on Priory lane. It may look muddy, even in summer, but appearance belies it. The stones—metalling which the old monks laid—are bedded firm beneath the mash of leaf-mould almost all the way. This wood has north-west-facing trees of growth less than in the Lyth, but they are in more variety. Oak, ash and wych elm companion the beeches. Under them in one spot, lonely in its waste of dead leaves as Stonehenge on its Plain, grows the Green Hellebore. It seems conscious of its survival in precarious state, a trifle forlorn. A superstition of ill luck, mind, attaches to its digging-up; but then, the all-green though contrasted flowers and leaves are not very tempting in their rarity.

The slope of Dorton wood is more gradual than the Lyth, and along under it on your right hand you have the stream, now entitled with more dignity the Oakhanger stream. Its little bends and reaches, rapids, pools, if you scale the eye down, give exactly the beauty of large rivers. The stream is seen indeed to its best advantage from the elevation of this shadowy old road, in shallows glittering, in deepness dimmed below.

Places of Interest Around Selborne

From Selborne, rich in its own attractions and history, day outings can be made by road and rail to places of interest in the social life and history of Southern England, museums of all kinds, and collections of Wild Life, that will fascinate and entertain the whole family.

Starting in an easterly direction see the watermill at Headley which sells its own stone ground flour, the Devil's Punch Bowl at Hindhead, and Frensham Ponds. Near Alice Holt Forest (Forestry Commission), at Holt Pound, is 'Birdworld' where a collection of nearly eight hundred exotic Birds can be seen in a beautifully designed zoological Bird Garden. Now in 1977 Birdworld's new Aquarium is now open. Not far away at Tilford is the Old Kiln Agricultural Museum, and at Wrecclesham the Ridgeway House Farm for traditional Country Crafts.

To the south-east are Midhurst, Petworth, the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton, Goodwood, Chichester with its Festival Theatre, Fishbourne with its Roman Palace, and Uppark at South Harting.

To the south is Petersfield, the Queen Elizabeth Country Park at Butser with its Iron Age Farm project, Portsmouth with Nelson's Victory, the holiday resort of Southsea, and inland again, Hambledon where cricket was first played and wine is produced.

To the south-west is Southampton, the Solent, the New Forest, Bucklers Hard where Nelson's ships were built, Beaulieu and the Montagu Motor Museum, and Marwell Zoological Park.

To the west at Warnford visit Old Winchester Hill nature reserve with its natural history exhibition, then Winchester, Capital of Saxon England and County Town of Hampshire, with its Cathedral and Castle. Further west are Salisbury, Wilton the home of Wilton Carpets, and to the north Stonehenge.

To the north-west is the market town of Alton with its Curtis Museum, founded by a descendant of the famous botanist William Curtis (1746-1799), author of "Flora Londinienis". The Museum contains many interesting examples of old rural craft tools and agricultural implements, archaeological specimens found in the locality, and a natural history collection of local flora & fauna. The Museum is now run by the Hampshire County Council. For opening times see notice board. The house of William Curtis, with a commemorative plaque, may be seen in Lenten Street. Another house of historical interest stands in Amery Street nearby, and was the home in 1590 of Edmund Spenser, the Elizabethan poet. See also the Allen Gallery in Church Street, where exhibitions of pottery, paintings and other objects of art are held frequently. Alton has a new Sports Centre with indoor heated swimming pools.

Four miles to the north-west of Selborne is Chawton with Jane Austen's house, now a Museum, where may be seen manuscripts and relics of the great writer. It was in this house, during the last eight years of her life, that Jane Austen wrote "Emma", "Mansfield Park", and "Persuasion". Jane Austen was born at Steventon in 1775, and died at Winchester in 1817. Her grave, and a stained glass window with memorial tablet beneath, are in Winchester Cathedral. The Museum is open daily.

At Alresford there is the 'Watercress Line' for steam train enthusiasts which runs trips. Opened in 1977 – details obtainable at Alresford Station.

At East Worldham there is a Pottery, and at Binstead will be found the grave of Field Marshal Lord Montgomery of Alamein, who died in 1976, and was buried under a Yew Tree. He lived at Isington Mill.

To the north is the Thames Valley and, between Reading and Maidenhead, the Courage Shire Horse Centre. The horses were formerly stabled at Alton and visited the Queens Hotel and Selborne. Nearby is Windsor, and just across the river, Eton.

North-east is London, and everything the Capital has to offer. Trains from Alton or Liss arrive at Waterloo, within walking distance of Westminster.

Or relax, leave your car behind and walk, explore the many delightful villages within a 5 mile radius of Selborne, each village having its own character and features of interest, e.g.: Oakhanger and its commons dominated by Skynet – the Services communications centre; Blackmoor with its orchards; the hangers of Hawkley and Empshott; and Noar Hill, a nature reserve. In East Worldham's Parish Church may be seen the effigy of Philippa, wife of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer. Newton Valence is frequently mentioned by Gilbert White, and his nephew Edmund White was vicar there. Other nearby villages of different scenic appeal are: Hartley Mauditt, Hawkley, Farringdon, Colemore and Priors Dean.

For the visitor intent upon exploring the neighbourhood, the one-inch Ordnance Survey Map, sheet No. 169, is recommended.

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The Gilbert White Museum and the Oates Memorial Library & Museum

The Wakes was the home of the pioneer naturalist Gilbert White from 1729 until his death in 1793 and it was from the garden, and the Hanger and countryside beyond, that White made the accurate and perceptive observations so uniquely described in his classic "The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne". First published in 1789 the work has since appeared in 200 editions and translations, making its author and the village of Selborne famous throughout the world.
The Wakes and garden are now memorials devoted to Gilbert White, his work in natural history, and to his writing. An additional feature is the Antarctica Exhibition in memory of Captain "Titus" Oates, the "very gallant gentleman" who died with Scott on the tragic South Pole expedition of 1912.

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